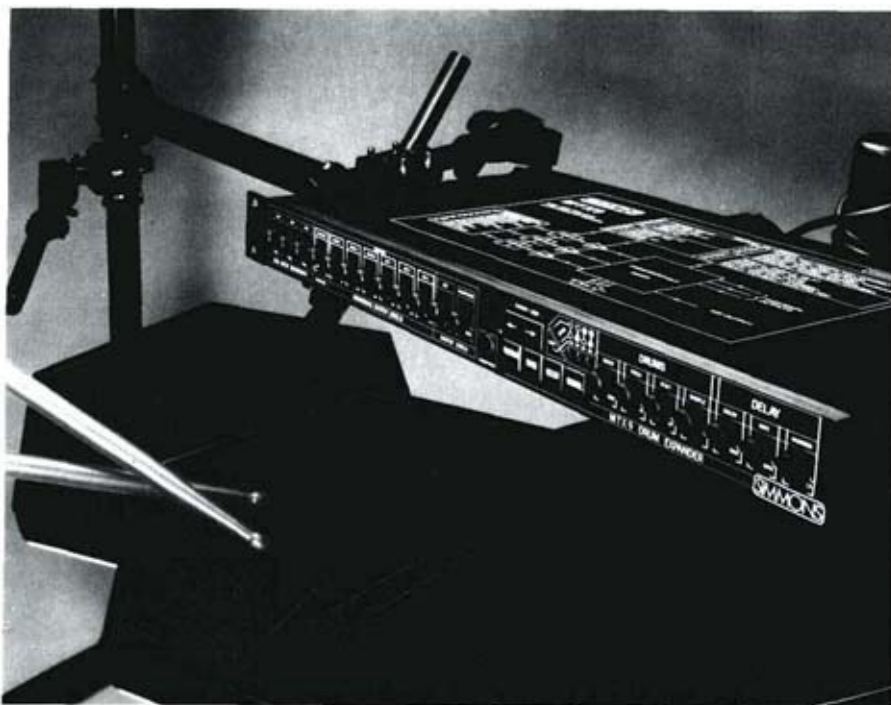


by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.

# Simmons MTX-9 Expander



Simmons' new *MTX-9* is a three-channel percussion expander unit that can be used by itself, or in conjunction with the *SDS9* or *SDS1000* kits. The *MTX-9* contains 11 digitally sampled tom-tom and Latin percussion sounds, and can be triggered via pads or MIDI. The unit is rack-mountable and can store 40 "kits": 20 factory presets (in ROM) and 20 user-programmable kits (in RAM).

Available sounds in the *MTX-9* are: power tom, dry tom, electro tom (the old *SDS5* sound), timbale, conga, tambourine, Cabasa, clap, cowbell, clave, and sidestick. Since the unit is three-channel, you could have one kit set up using the same sample sound (i.e., conga) pitched differently on each of the three pads, or you could set up a kit containing three entirely different samples. There are quite a few possible combinations.

The rear of the *MTX-9* has three pad inputs and outputs, as well as a Mix output. It has jacks for MIDI thru, MIDI in, and cassette load/dump (it's capable of storing or retrieving on cassette), plus a

footswitch jack for remote kit selection. If you own an *SDS9*, the *MTX-9* sounds can be mixed in with your *SDS9* toms by using the three external tom inputs and trigger-thru jacks.

An array of knobs, buttons, and LEDs are on the front side of the *MTX-9*. Each pad has its own sensitivity control and output level. There is also a master mix level and headphone level (plus a headphone jack). Separate level controls are available for three external sources (such as your *SDS9* tom pads). This allows you to blend both the *MTX-9* and *SDS9* sounds on each pad, or replace the *SDS9* sounds altogether with the *MTX-9*'s digital samples. A "Dynamic" control is there to increase small dynamics, and it adds a compression effect at higher volumes (with an LED to signify that function).

The kits are stored in four banks of five kits. LEDs are used to indicate kit banks A-B-C-D; the same LEDs are also used for MIDI note numbers and MIDI channel. There is a MIDI function indicator LED as well. A window display is used to show kit

number (1-5). When in user mode, a dot appears after the kit number, just like on the *SDS9*. A large push button is used to change from factory to user mode, in addition to selection of kit number. Pressing the left side of the button decreases the kit number, while pressing the right side increases it. Pressing at dead center changes the mode (factory/user). I find this to be a major help in getting to the location you want, instead of cycling around all kits and both modes.

Four smaller push buttons are used to program a kit, store a kit, save a drum channel, and select a bank or drum channel. Other programming controls are: Pitch (increase or decrease), Sample Select (1-11), Decay, which allows a partial or full sample to be heard, and Shift, which increases or decreases pitch corresponding with the dynamic level. The *MTX-9* also has an onboard delay that can be programmed for decay rate, the time between echoes, and the total number of echoes (up to 15).

All in all, programming kits is pretty simple, once you know what to do. Simmons' owners manual is very well-written, so you shouldn't have any problem. The sounds built into the *MTX-9* are all great. The preset kits are all specifically arranged as to group and pitch, and thus can't be varied. But with the user function, you can develop your own kit combinations and tailor the sounds to your own personal liking.

The *MTX-9* is meant to interface with the *SDS9* but will work with *SDS1000* kits. It can also be used with various other Simmons products, such as the *SPM8:2* mixer, *MTM* and *TMI* MIDI converters, and *SDE* percussion expander, or it can be used alone. The unit is available two ways: with three Simmons pads at \$899 retail or the *MTX-9* brain alone for \$699 retail. Either way, drummers can now have hand percussion sounds readily available while playing on a kit, *SDS9* owners can update their analog tom sounds to digital sounds, and percussionists should love the flexibility the *MTX-9* affords. No doubt we'll see the *MTX-9* popping up in some hand percussionist's arsenal quite soon.